UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2001/5/Add.3
6 November 2000

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-seventh session
Item 14 (c) of the provisional agenda

SPECIFIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS: MASS EXODUSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General,
Mr. Francis Deng, submitted pursuant to
Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/53

Addendum

Profiles in displacement: Armenia

GE.00-15719 (E)

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
Introduction	1 - 8	3
I. Overview of the displacement crisis	9 - 17	4
II. Findings of the field visit	18 - 29	6
III. National and international responses	30 - 44	9
IV. Conclusions	45 - 50	12
V. Recommendations	51 - 60	14
Annex: Map of Armenia		18

Introduction

1. At the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Representative undertook a mission to Armenia from 18 to 19 May 2000.

2. The objectives of the mission were four-fold. First, to study and document the situation of internal displacement in Armenia - a situation on which there is a paucity of research and analysis.[1] Second, to seek to understand the reasons why little attention has been paid to the plight of the internally displaced. Was this the result of lack of awareness and oversight, in which case attention to the problem was greatly needed? Or, quite the opposite, was it because, as was widely suggested to the Representative prior to the mission, that the internally displaced had been effectively absorbed into host communities such that their situation was now no different from that of the general population so that targeted attention to their needs was not required? If the latter explanation were true, then the case of Armenia nonetheless warranted study as a potential model of a particularly constructive response to the problem of internal displacement. In seeking to arrive at an explanation, the mission sought to determine whether the internally displaced had particular needs, different from the general population, as a result of their displacement or whether their current situation indeed did not warrant focused attention. Based on the answer to this question, a third objective of the mission was to determine, through solutions-oriented dialogue with the Government and with representatives of the international community and of civil society, appropriate responses for addressing the current needs of the internally displaced. Fourth, the mission sought to understand the problem of internal displacement in Armenia in its subregional context. In so doing, the mission to Armenia built upon the Representative's missions to Azerbaijan in 1998 (E/CN.4/1999/79/Add.1) and, immediately preceding the visit to Armenia, to Georgia (E/CN.4/2001/5/Add.4), as well as the Regional Workshop on Internal Displacement in the South Caucasus co-sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement and the Norwegian Refugee Council, and at which representatives of the Government of Armenia as well as of international organizations and international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged with the problem of internal displacement in Armenia were among the participants (see E/CN.4/2001/5/Add.2).

3. In light of the increased awareness of and attention to the problem of internal displacement in Armenia, which was noted to have been stimulated in part by the Regional Workshop and preparations for the mission, the Representative's visit proved most timely. Government programmes to address the situation of the internally displaced were being drafted and beginning to be discussed, enabling the Representative, over the course of his brief visit and through his dialogue with government officials as well as representatives of the international community and of civil society, to contribute to the process of their further development. In this sense, the mission was noted by government officials and representatives of the international community as having been particularly constructive.

4. The Representative was received by His Excellency the President of the Republic, Robert Kocharian, the Minister of Regional Administration and Urban Planning, the Minister of Social Security and Health, and the Speaker of the National Assembly. Extensive consultations were held with the head and other officials of the Department for Migration and

Refugees (DMR), the government body responsible for internal displacement. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, His Excellency Ambassador Karen Nazarian, who had travelled to Armenia for the purpose of facilitating the Representative's visit, attended these meetings with government officials. The Representative also discussed the situation of internal displacement with international agencies and NGOs, the head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, donor agencies and local NGOs.

5. The programme included a field visit to Ijevan district in the region of Tavoush, located in the north-eastern part of the country and bordering on Azerbaijan. Accompanied by the Governor of Tavoush, the Representative visited a number of villages in the border areas, where he was received by the mayors and had the opportunity to meet with internally displaced persons and local residents. The findings of the field visit are elaborated in section II.

6. Throughout the mission, and as requested by the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, the Representative used the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2) as the basis for his dialogue with government officials and representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Government of Armenia responded very positively to the Guiding Principles. Indeed, at its initiative, it indicated that it would translate them into Armenian and disseminate them actively in the country.

7. The Representative would like to express his appreciation to all those who took the time to meet with the mission delegation and share their insight into the situation. He is particularly grateful to the United Nations Resident Coordinator and her staff as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, and the DMR for their assistance in organizing the programme of the mission.

8. The report is organized into five sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the situation of internal displacement in the country. Section II sets out the findings of the field visit. Section III sketches the national and international responses. Section IV draws the conclusions of the mission. Finally, section V consolidates a number of recommendations, which also find reflection in earlier sections, for enhancing national and international responses to the situation of internal displacement.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

9. According to government figures, there are 192,000 internally displaced persons in Armenia. This figure covers displacement due to a variety of causes. An estimated 72,000 persons were displaced as a result of military operations in areas bordering Azerbaijan due to the decade-old conflict regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. Though a 1994 ceasefire remains in effect, the conflict remains without a political solution and there have been recurrent skirmishes and instances of shelling in border areas. The remainder of the internally displaced were uprooted as a result of natural or human-made disasters: an estimated 100,000 persons continue to be displaced as a result of the devastating earthquake of 1988 which resulted in the death of over 25,000 people and rendered some 500,000 persons homeless; 10,000 persons have been displaced as a result of more recent natural disasters, in particular mudslides; and a further 10,000 persons have been internally displaced as a result of human-made disasters.

10. The mission focused on the plight of those internally displaced by the conflict. While this has tended to be the case for the Representative's missions generally, in Armenia, doing so was considered particularly important on account of the broad consensus among persons with whom the Representative met that, in contrast with the case of persons uprooted by natural disasters in Armenia, in particular by the earthquake, the plight of persons internally displaced by the conflict had received little attention, at either the national or international level. At the time of the Representative's visit, efforts to assess and to comprehensively address the particular situation of the conflict-induced internally displaced recently had begun but, as will be explained below, remained at a nascent stage.

11. It should be noted that independent estimates of the number of internally displaced persons are lower than the figure of 72,000 cited by the Government. The U.S. Committee for Refugees, for instance, cites a figure of roughly 60,000.[2] The discrepancy in figures can, at least in part, be explained by the fact that the figure of 72,000 conflict-induced internally displaced persons cited by the Government includes several thousand persons displaced into Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh who would thus be refugees, rather than internally displaced persons. Indeed, the Government acknowledged that among the 72,000 conflict-induced internally displaced "a great number" are refugees who came to the Republic during 1988-1992, who were initially settled in the border areas inside Armenia and then became displaced again, within Armenia, due to insecurity in those areas.

12. Moreover, in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union, its legacy continues to complicate drawing a clear description of patterns of displacement as a result of the complex patchwork of political borders in the Caucasus region that has been inherited by the successor States. In the case of Armenia, its territory includes the small exclave of Artzvashen located a few kilometres from the border in north-western Azerbaijan (see map at annex). As a result of the conflict, the population of this area fled into Armenia proper. Though in doing so they were required, owing to the peculiar geographical arrangement created by the exclave, to cross an internationally recognized border - twice, as citizens of Armenia fleeing from one part of the country to another, they arguably ought to be considered as internally displaced.

13. Within Armenia proper, internal displacement as a result of the conflict was concentrated in the marzes or districts along the border with Azerbaijan, namely Tavoush, Sjounik, Vajots Dzor, Ararat and Gegharkounik. A comprehensive survey in these regions undertaken in 1998 by the Refugees and Displaced Persons Working Group provides important information about the characteristics of the displacement crisis.[3] Initially, 50-60 per cent of the population, mainly women, children and the elderly, left the villages for the summer pasture lands, where they lived in temporary dwellings. Though in some cases, usually during continuous military actions, residents moved as complete family units, the separation of families was common: half of the displaced households in Tavoush, Vajots Dzor and Gegharkounik marzes constitute families of only one or two members. The other half consists mostly of young families which have remained intact but have been separated from relatives.

14. Though some of the displaced remained in the pasture lands for almost two years, for the most part, the displaced were regularly on the move. They tended to move from the border villages incrementally, first leaving for the summer pasture lands, then to safer locations within the marz. Later, those who could - usually the wealthier among them - moved on into the central

parts of Armenia and even, ultimately, emigrated. Consequently, the internally displaced are dispersed throughout the country rather than settled as compact, easily identifiable groups. Indeed, both the Government and the international agencies working in the country reported having difficulties in knowing precisely where the internally displaced were located.

15. One major exception to this settlement pattern is the population displaced from Artzvashen. Persons displaced from this exclave largely settled as communities in the predominantly ethnically Azeri towns located between the border and the northern shore of Lake Sevan which were abandoned by ethnic Azeri refugees who fled from Armenia to Azerbaijan. In some cases, they are occupying the homes abandoned by the Azeri refugees.

16. As noted above, in the ultimate step in this pattern of incremental population movement, a sizeable but undetermined number of internally displaced persons have left the country. This has occurred as part of the larger trend of out-migration of several hundreds of thousands of Armenians in search of better economic opportunities. Internally displaced persons as well as refugees make up a disproportionately high number of the persons leaving the country: it was suggested as a possible explanation that because these persons are already mobile they are more inclined to leave, especially given the absence, within the country, of durable solutions to their plight. As the Government noted with great concern, the phenomenon of mass out-migration exacerbates the challenges of reconstruction in the areas affected by the war as well as the socio-economic development of the country as a whole.

17. In this connection, it must be noted that the internal displacement crisis occurred in the context of a difficult period of post-Soviet transition, involving not only a sudden change of political system but an abrupt transition towards a competitive market economy which led to a sharp decline in living standards. The economic blockade by Azerbaijan and, subsequently, Turkey as a consequence of the conflict has further exacerbated the economic difficulties of the country. Among the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Armenia is reported to have the highest rate of official unemployment and one of the lowest levels of nominal salary - approximately US$ 25 per month.[4] More than half of the population lives below the poverty line and almost 28 per cent of the population is very poor and unable to secure minimum nutritional requirements.[5] While these difficult economic conditions have affected the population as a whole, the United Nations reports that the process of economic transformation has placed a particularly heavy burden on the socially vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons, "whose situation grows worse as prices increase and pensions and salaries are eroded".[6] At the same time, the economic difficulties also constrain the capacity of the Government to address their plight.

II. FINDINGS OF THE FIELD VISIT

18. Focusing on the conflict-induced internally displaced, the mission undertook a field visit to the region of Tavoush, where considerable displacement occurred as a result of insecurity stemming from the conflict. This region constitutes roughly 10 per cent of the territory of Armenia but, given its location along 350 kilometres of border with Azerbaijan, it has been disproportionately affected by the problem of conflict-induced displacement. At the same time,

it has also suffered internal displacement due to natural disasters, in particular mudslides. The Governor of Tavoush informed the Representative that there were 28,000 internally displaced persons in the region, of whom 16,000 had already returned to their homes.

19. Accompanied by the Governor, the Representative visited a number of villages in the border area, specifically: Vazashen, which is located only 1 kilometre from the border, Nerkin-Karmiraghbjur and Ajgepar. In all of these villages, the Representative was received by the local authorities and had the opportunity to meet with internally displaced and returnee communities as well as members of the local population who had not fled. As both the Representative and, indeed, the Working Group Survey found, the main problems faced by the returning internally displaced, and often also confronted by the local population, were in the areas of shelter, security, self-sufficiency and social infrastructure.

A. Shelter

20. In the border regions, the Survey found that an estimated 75 per cent of the displaced were living in pasture huts and other temporary dwellings, 18 per cent residing with relatives, 3 per cent were accommodated in hostels and rest homes and only 4 per cent had been able to purchase homes of their own.[7]

21. According to government estimates, more than 12,300 houses in the border regions were damaged, with 40 per cent of these having been ruined.[8] In the region of Tavoush, it was estimated that some 250 houses had been completely destroyed, 935 had been seriously damaged and more than 7,000 had suffered some damage. The Governor reported that the houses of only a small number of returnees had been reconstructed. Usually, this has been the result of the returnees' own efforts, though it was noted that the local government had provided some reconstruction assistance in 1994 immediately after the introduction of the ceasefire when some people began to return, and especially to women heads of household.

22. Indeed, in the villages visited, damage to shelter was evident, with the extent of damage varying from one shelter to another. The mission met with one elderly woman whose house had been completely destroyed and who was compelled to live in a stable. It also visited returnees living adjacent to their destroyed homes in temporary shelter consisting of an iron container which had initially been used by persons who had lost their homes as a result of the earthquake of 1988. By "temporary", it was explained that these structures were designed for use of a period of two years. Now in use for 12 years, these structures are showing signs of serious wear, including leaks and water damage. Moreover, the Representative was informed that many of the shelters reportedly were not even in habitable condition when they were first provided to the conflict-induced internally displaced: the Minister for Regional Administration and Urban Planning (whose responsibilities include securing shelter for internally displaced persons) spoke candidly about the inadequate condition of the temporary shelter provided by the Government, noting that they had been "falling to pieces" when they were transported to the internally displaced several years ago. Lacking insulation, the shelters were reported to be very cold in the winter and hot in the summer.

23. Local authorities in the villages in the border areas stressed, above all, the need for shelter reconstruction, maintaining that if houses were rebuilt, more people would return.

B. Security

24. While security incidents in the border regions were reported to have decreased significantly, particularly in recent months with progress in the peace process, in the absence of a lasting settlement to the conflict security risks persist, especially in the villages located in close proximity to the border. As an indication that such dangers remain very real, when visiting one village located only a kilometre from the border, the mission delegation was instructed to disembark from the cars and leave these concealed behind trees so as to minimize the risk of "being shot at". Another village visited was 700 metres from the border, with trench lines clearly visible.

25. Heavy mining of the region poses a further security risk. In Armenia, as in other countries with displacement, it is a risk that is heightened for returning displaced persons who, on account of their absence from the area, have less knowledge as to the location of mines.

C. Self-sufficiency

26. In the border areas, agriculture and stock-breeding constituted the main means of food for subsistence as well as income-generating activity, either directly through the sale of commodities or through employment in processing plants. At present, however, agricultural activities are severely curtailed: about 25 per cent of cultivable land and about 40 per cent of irrigated land is not being utilized, primarily due to the lack of agricultural equipment and seeds, damage to irrigation systems, lack of agricultural labour and the significant presence of landmines. In one village visited by the Representative, it was reported that 254 out of 390 plots cannot be cultivated owing to the presence of mines. At the same time, residents informed the Representative that despite the lack of access to their land, they are compelled to pay taxes on land which they cannot cultivate - a requirement which appears inherently unjust and should be relaxed by the Government until such time that demining occurs and enables safe access to the land. Decreasing the profitability of the agricultural production which does occur are the problems of transportation to market caused by damage to roads and the fact that plants for the processing of agricultural goods also have been destroyed or damaged. Reportedly, only one in five internally displaced persons in the border areas is employed.[9]

D. Social infrastructure, including health care and education

27. According to government figures, more than 78 educational centres, 62 medical clinics, 515 km of water pipes, 724 km of irrigation water pipes and 575 km of road have been damaged in the border regions. Sixty per cent of roads are classified as ruined and 70 per cent of villages reportedly are deprived of potable and irrigation water.[10]

28. Access to health care is limited. Only 60 per cent of the border villages have a medical office and these have only 20 per cent of the required personnel, resulting in a quality of medical examination and treatment considered to be well below standard.[11]

29. Educational opportunities also have been severely curtailed. Some border villages have no functioning schools. Where school facilities do exist, 60 per cent require urgent renovation and 12 per cent of the buildings require basic renovation to make them usable at all. School

buildings are considered to be in particularly poor condition in Tavoush and Sjunik marzes. Throughout the region, functioning nursery schools are very rare.[12] Aside from the damage to or destruction of physical infrastructure, a number of other problems impede access to education. Qualified teachers are required for most of the schools; however, given the poor housing conditions in the area, few teachers are willing to live in the region. Pupils suffer from a lack of textbooks and other school supplies.[13] Moreover, when it rains heavily, a number of the (dirt) roads are washed out and become impassable, making transportation very difficult. Under such conditions, which prevailed on the day of the Representative's visit, children are unable to attend school - as indeed was the case that day. The impact of the conflict on education has been devastating. The mayor of one village, lamenting that "children are lost in such conditions", explained that in the 10 years since the war, not a single child from the village had gone on to higher education, whereas 8-10 children routinely had done so during the pre-war (and Soviet) period.

III. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

30. Within the Government, the focal point for the issue of internal displacement is the Department for Migration and Refugees (DMR). Formerly part of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the DMR was established in 1999 as an independent department, reporting to the Prime Minister. Its mandate is to develop and coordinate implementation of a unified national policy of migration, including with respect to internally displaced persons. Valuable assistance in developing national policy, harmonizing migration-related legislation and undertaking certain operational programmes is being provided to the DMR by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through its Capacity Building in Migration Management Programme. As part of this programme, working groups comprised of government officials from the relevant ministries and academics, supported by IOM, have been established to formulate recommendations for government review in the areas of policy and management; legislation; refugees and internally displaced persons; and border management and information systems.

31. Internally displaced persons from the border areas, the 1999 report of the Working Group on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons found, "have been given almost no attention by the State, because of too many and complicated refugee and ecological migrant problems, as well as the overloaded State budget".[14] Broad consensus on this point was found to exist among the variety of actors with whom the Representative met during the mission - the Government, United Nations agencies, international NGOs, civil society and donors. They acknowledged that the plight of the conflict-induced internally displaced had not received any particular focus at either the national or international level and that there was little awareness of the problem of internal displacement or the needs of the internally displaced and few programmes specifically designed to address their plight.

32. Practical as well as substantive reasons were offered to explain this. First, it was noted that humanitarian action had been focused on addressing the needs of the earthquake victims and then, added to this, some 340,000 refugees from the conflict. Each of these groups of beneficiaries was larger in terms of numbers than the internally displaced and their needs overwhelming: indeed, as reported above, 12 years after the earthquake some 100,000 persons

uprooted by it continue to be in need of assistance. Those persons displaced by the earthquake as well as those who fled to Armenia as part of the refugee influx from Azerbaijan also were considered to be more easily identifiable populations in need than the internally displaced, who had fled in small groups, in most cases to the homes of relatives, and thus became dispersed. Indeed, as noted earlier, the Government and the international community have not precisely mapped out the location and needs of the internally displaced population of the country.

33. Second, and more substantively, it has been assumed that the needs of the internally displaced would be addressed through general programmes for vulnerable groups and for poverty alleviation. More focused attention, international agencies in particular observed, would risk privileging the internally displaced compared with the rest of the population. At the same time, however, it was acknowledged that general programmes may not adequately take into account the particular needs of internally displaced persons; indeed, there was a lack of clarity about the extent to which existing programmes in fact do so.

34. Take, for instance, the system of food distribution three times a year by the World Food Programme (WFP) to 110,000 vulnerable persons, identified according to lists provided by the Government-run vulnerability assessment system known as PAROS (Armenian for "beacon"). Though food assistance initially was focused on refugees, internally displaced persons and earthquake victims, in order to take into account that part of the general population also suffering food insecurity, in 1994 a targeting mechanism was put into place with the PAROS system to ensure that food distribution reached those most in need. PAROS assesses household or family vulnerability by taking into account a number of factors: (i) family composition, including the presence of household members belonging to socially vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities; (ii) household income level including assets; and (iii) location and conditions of residence. A numerical weighting is assigned to each variable and, on this basis, a vulnerability index calculated for each household. Though both WFP and the PAROS Director could state with certainty that the 110,000 beneficiaries of WFP assistance included internally displaced persons, their precise number was not known. That is because internally displaced persons are not specifically identified, but have their vulnerability assessed on the same basis as the population at large. To be sure, a special coefficient in the calculation of vulnerability is assigned in the case of persons in the conflict border areas (as in the earthquake zones) as well as for persons in temporary housing. However, unlike for refugees, there is no specific weighting given to the displacement itself and the particular vulnerabilities that arise from being displaced. And yet, the report of the Working Group on Refugees and Displaced Persons stressed that the internally displaced persons compelled to leave their homes as result of military action in the border areas are one of the most vulnerable social groups in Armenia.[15]

A. Towards a more focused response

35. In an effort to begin to address the needs of Armenia's conflict-induced internally displaced population, the DMR has formulated, on the basis of the Working Group's survey of the border regions, a project proposal to support the return of conflict-induced internally displaced persons through the rehabilitation of the border areas from where they originated.[16] The project is designed to support the return both of the 28,000 who already have returned as well as of the 39,000 additional displaced persons who are expected to want to do so, while also

improving the conditions of the non-displaced local population. This comprehensive, community-based approach taking into account the different groups of affected populations in the border areas and seeking to respond to their needs in an integrated manner is a particularly welcome aspect of the project.

36. The project has four principal areas of activity. First, shelter conditions are to be restored to minimum standards through the repair or reconstruction of homes. Support for home repair is to be provided to returnees and the non-displaced alike. In the case of homes that have been totally destroyed, one-room houses with 25 square metres of living space are to be constructed, at a cost of under US$ 4,000 each.

37. Secondly, social infrastructure is to be rehabilitated through a series of projects to rebuild educational and health care facilities, water systems, electricity, transport and communications. The participation of internally displaced persons in these projects is to be ensured so as to create income-generating opportunities for them.

38. As a third component, to facilitate their reintegration, returnees are to receive food assistance for the initial six months, after which point it is expected that with the support of agricultural implements and micro-credit the resumption of agricultural work and other income-generating activities will enable self-sufficiency. For those displaced persons whose land is in mined areas, new plots of land are to be allocated until such time that demining occurs.

39. The fourth component of the project is a demining programme. Although some demining of the border areas has begun, a comprehensive demining programme is still required.

40. The project is to be implemented under the coordination of the DMR, in collaboration with local and national authorities, and involving international and local non-governmental organizations as well. The estimated total cost of the project is US$ 81 million, to be spent over a period of three years. The Government is prepared to "finance the project each year in the limits of its possibilities" and will seek assistance from the international community for the remainder. Officials in the DMR suggested that the Government would be able to contribute to the project something on the order of US$ 15 million of the $81 million required. Several government officials spoke of the significant amount of international attention and assistance devoted to the plight of internally displaced persons in other countries in the region, suggesting the need for greater parity in the international approach.

B. Prerequisites of a plan of action

41. Clarification of the status of the project is an essential prerequisite for its implementation. Early into the Representative's brief mission, it became apparent that the project, which had been presented to him by the DMR, was only a proposal and still required approval within the Government. Indeed, several government officials with whom the Representative met were unaware of the project. Nor was there much awareness and understanding among them of the problem of internal displacement in Armenia that the project seeks to address. The United Nations Resident Representative shared this impression, noting that in UNDP's discussions with the Government (which were ongoing at the time of the mission) concerning its

priorities, budgetary planning and needs for assistance from the international community, no reference had been made to the issue of internal displacement or the project. There was thus a clear disconnection between the plans of the DMR and the priorities of the Government as a whole. Following a comment to this effect by the Representative, awareness among government officials of the nature of the problem of internal displacement as well as the project (though not necessarily the details of its contents) became noticeably greater over the course of the mission.

42. The project proposal also was unknown among United Nations agencies, international as well as local non-governmental organizations and representatives of the donor community. Some agencies and donors indicated that they might in principle be ready to consider supporting a programme to support return and reconstruction in the border areas but raised concerns regarding the cost of the project proposal being promoted by the DMR, which they had yet to see. Moreover, a number of international agencies and donors indicated that they did not have the sense that internal displacement was a priority issue for the Government as it had theretofore never been mentioned.

43. Detailed discussion of the substance of the project inevitably was sidetracked by these problems of process, both within the Government and in relation to the international community, which surfaced during the mission. In bringing these problems to the fore, however, the mission nonetheless provided an opportunity to address them. Indeed, doing so became a main focus of the Representative's mission.

44. With the active involvement of the United Nations Resident Representative, the following three-step plan of action for moving forward with the project proposal was worked out with government officials. First, it would be necessary to consolidate government support for the project. Government officials suggested that initially this should occur by means of a trilateral meeting between officials of the DMR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Economy. Other relevant ministries, especially those of Regional Administration and Urban Planning, and Social Security and Health, would then also need to be engaged. The project would need to be formally adopted by the Government and incorporated into the national budget and policy framework. Doing so would give a clear signal that the project's aim, to address the needs of the internally displaced, is a priority for the Government. This, in turn, would enable better coordination with the international community and create the basis for the mobilization of international resources. Second, the project would be officially presented to the United Nations and international community for consideration. But even before all of this, an assessment of internally displaced persons in the country would need to be undertaken to establish their whereabouts, needs and, in particular, their intention to return to their home areas and under what conditions. For those who do not intend to return, projects supporting resettlement will need to be formulated.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

45. By way of conclusion, it can be said that the mission achieved its four stated objectives. The first of these was to study and document the situation of internal displacement in Armenia. It is to be hoped that this report contributes to greater awareness and understanding of this particularly under-reported case of internal displacement.

46. Part of understanding the situation of internal displacement in Armenia involved placing it in its subregional context, a second objective of the mission. As in other cases in the region, a shared ethnic identity between the displaced and the authorities helps to explain why, in a situation of ethnic conflict, the internally displaced are not associated by the authorities with the "enemy" and denied national protection and assistance on that basis. However, the situation of internal displacement in Armenia differs from that in other countries in the region in a number of ways. To begin with, the number of persons uprooted is comparatively small. The nature of the displacement crisis also is different in that the affected areas were on the sidelines rather than in the centre of the area of conflict (which has been concentrated outside of the territory of Armenia) and are not under occupation. There are no camps or other large and visible concentrations of internally displaced persons, who instead have largely been taken in by relatives or friends or settled in small groups in temporary accommodation. Indeed, as noted earlier, government officials and international personnel have not mapped out where the internally displaced are located. Also, a defining characteristic of the Government's response to internal displacement in Armenia, which contrasts with other cases in the region, is that the plight of the internally displaced has not been highlighted and promoted for political purposes, in particular for the regain of territory. In fact, the Government has paid little attention to the issue of internal displacement as such. Moreover, its approach has been reflected in the international community's response, which has also not focused attention and resources on the plight of the internally displaced in Armenia as it has in other countries. On account of the difficult economic situation of the country as a whole, the Government clearly is lacking the capacity to meet the needs of its internally displaced single-handedly. International support to reinforce Armenia's efforts is required. Just as the problems of internal displacement must be viewed in their regional perspective, so too must international efforts to find solutions to them.

47. Another mission objective was to gain an understanding of why so little attention had been paid to the internally displaced by the Government and the international community and whether more focused attention was required. The impression, prior to the mission, was that the internally displaced had been absorbed into the general population and that this was the result of a community-based holistic approach, which could serve as a potential model. However, the mission found that the lack of attention to the internally displaced was due more to oversight of their needs than a deliberate policy seeking their integration into society. Government officials, civil society, international agencies and the donor community all acknowledged that they had not devoted specific attention to the internally displaced and thus not addressed their specific needs. Among the particular hardships faced by the internally displaced and identified by international agencies were loss of or damage to shelter, lack of access to land, psychological trauma, little engagement in economic activity and lack of government response to their needs. In this last connection, the President referred to Armenia's conflict-displaced internally displaced as "The Forsaken People" in express reference to the book of the same name co-edited by the Representative.[17] The openness of the Government in acknowledging its past shortcoming in this regard is a bold and constructive step.

48. The field visit proved tremendously enlightening in terms of identifying and highlighting the needs of the internally displaced. Literature on the situation as well as the preliminary meetings held by the mission delegation with government officials and international agencies in the capital had suggested that the needs of internally displaced persons were being satisfactorily

addressed through general programmes for poverty alleviation. However, as the field visit made evident and as the Working Group survey has documented in greater detail, clearly this is not the case. Considerable needs of the internally displaced in the conflict areas are not being attended to, especially with regard to shelter, safe access to land, opportunities for self-sufficiency and access to health care and education. The field visit, and indeed the mission as a whole, was said to have been helpful to the Government and international agencies present in the country, raising their awareness of the particular vulnerabilities of internally displaced persons and how current programmes were not adequately addressing these.

49. A fourth, and final, objective of the mission was to explore, through solutions-oriented dialogue with the Government and other relevant actors, appropriate responses to the situation of internal displacement. Although there was beginning to be greater awareness within the Government of the issue of internal displacement and, consequently, some projects developed to address it, a comprehensive approach on the part of all relevant government ministries and departments was lacking. The lack of coordination within the Government on the issue made evident that internal displacement was not yet a national priority and this, in turn, was undermining the possibilities for international engagement and support. Intense efforts to address these issues became an important, though unexpected, focus of the mission. It is to be hoped that the steps identified by the Government as necessary to move forward its programme for the conflict-induced displaced have since been taken.

50. Though several years late in coming, the recent awareness of and attention to the situation of internal displacement in Armenia is certainly welcome. At the same time, there is a need to resist the tendency, which is strong in the region, to politicize the plight of the internally displaced in the pursuit of geo-strategic objectives. Also, addressing the particular needs of the internally displaced must remain part of a community-based holistic approach which also takes into account the rehabilitation and development needs of the population at large.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

51. **Conduct a comprehensive survey and needs assessment**. As a first step, detailed data must be collected on the situation of internal displacement - information which at present is sorely lacking. In particular, there is a need for a determination of the number of internally displaced persons, disaggregated data on their gender, age and socio-economic profile, a mapping of their location in the country, and an assessment of their current needs as well as intention to return to their home regions or resettle elsewhere. Gaining an accurate picture of the number, location and conditions of internally displaced persons in the country is a prerequisite for designing programmes to address their needs.

52. **Recognize internal displacement as a factor of vulnerability**. The identification by the Working Group on Refugees and Displaced Persons of internally displaced persons as one of the most vulnerable social groups in the country should be reflected in any vulnerability assessment. As with refugees, the mere fact of being internally displaced should be allotted a special coefficient in the PAROS system of vulnerability assessment that is used to determine eligibility for food assistance.

53. **Increase national awareness of internally displaced persons**. Greater awareness of the needs of internally displaced persons is required among public officials as well as within the public at large. The translation by the Government of the Guiding Principles into Armenian should facilitate awareness-raising efforts.

54. **Ensure the voluntariness of return**. Though this is a guiding principle of the DMR project proposal and, according to international agencies, is expected not to be a problem, the voluntariness of return would still need to be monitored. This is an area of activity in which both IOM and the OSCE noted they may be in a position to play a role, in partnership with local NGOs.

55. **Objectively assess security conditions in areas of return**. To adequately inform the decision of internally displaced persons whether to return, an objective assessment of security conditions in the potential areas of return is required. Area-specific assessments are required as the security conditions along the border areas are not uniform. For instance, areas bordering territory in Azerbaijan occupied by Armenian forces generally are considered to be safe, whereas regions of Armenia bordering territory that remains under the effective control of the Government of Azerbaijan are considered to be at higher risk.

56. **Undertake comprehensive demining and mine-awareness**. A critical component of security assessments is the presence of landmines. There is a need for a comprehensive approach to this security threat, through the mapping of mines, a mine-awareness campaign and a demining programme.

57. **Ensure safe access to land**. As agriculture constituted the main economic activity of the internally displaced from the border regions, access to land is a key condition for sustainable return and self-sufficiency. Where, as is often the case, agricultural land is mined, temporary access to alternative cultivable land should be provided until demining is undertaken. Where internally displaced persons cannot access their own land due to the presence of mines, they should temporarily be relieved of obligations to pay taxes on this land.

58. **Support reconstruction and rehabilitation in the border regions**. A massive reconstruction and rehabilitation programme is required to restore minimum shelter conditions and rebuild social infrastructure, especially health care facilities and schools but also water and irrigation, electricity, transport and communication systems in the border areas. This programme should be holistic in nature, designed for the benefit both of returning internally displaced persons as well as the populations that never left. Given the considerable physical damage suffered in the border regions, international resources will need to be mobilized in support of such efforts. The project proposal for rehabilitation of the border areas that has been developed by the DMR provides a basis for discussions on this issue both within the Government and with the international community, including the World Bank which is sponsoring programmes supporting durable solutions for internally displaced persons in other countries in the region.

59. **Clarify, consolidate and coordinate government policy on internal displacement.** Effective engagement of the international community and, in particular, the mobilization of resources for programmes for internally displaced persons in Armenia will first require that the Government clearly identify the issue of internal displacement as a national priority and reflect

this in policy documents as well as in the national budget. To follow through on this priority, there is also a need to establish within the Government a mechanism for coordinating national policy on internal displacement among the various relevant ministries as well as with the international community. The DMR may be the most appropriate entity for this function, provided it is given adequate standing within the Government and the necessary resources.

60. **Actively support conflict-resolution efforts**. A truly durable solution to the problem of conflict-induced internal displacement in Armenia necessarily requires an end to the conflict itself. Advances in the peace process this past year, in particular through the initiation of dialogue between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, have given grounds for new optimism concerning possible concrete developments towards a political solution to the conflict. These efforts must continue to be supported, by the Governments concerned and by the international community.

Notes

[1] In an effort to begin filling this gap, the series of case studies on internal displacement commissioned by the Representative, as part of a comprehensive study of the global crisis on internal displacement, includes a chapter on the Caucasus, which contains a section on Armenia. See Thomas Greene, "Internal Displacement in the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia," in Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (eds.), The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1998), esp. pp. 232-240 and 271-283. Following the mission, and incorporating some of the information collected during it, the country profile on internal displacement in Armenia, prepared for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee global database on internal displacement, which is operated by the Norwegian Refugee Council, was released (see www.idpproject.org). The country profile is prefaced, however, by the caveat that "[t]here exists a general lack of knowledge on the scope and situation of the internally displaced population as a result of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia unlike internal displacement resulting from the 1988 earthquake in northwestern Armenia" and that "[i]nternational agencies in the country concede that measures should be taken to fill this gap".

[2] U.S. Committee for Refugees, World Refugee Survey 2000 (Washington, D.C.: Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 2000), p. 210.

[3] Refugees and Displaced Persons Work Group/Capacity Building Migration Management Programme/IOM, Migration Trends Among Internally Displaced Persons in Border Regions of the Republic of Armenia (January 1999), p. 16.

[4] 1999 Annual Report of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Armenia, p. 8.

[5] United Nations Development Programme, Common Country Assessment: Armenia (Yerevan: United Nations, 2000), p. 51.

[6] 1999 Annual Report of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Armenia, p. 13.

[7] Migration Trends, p. 15.

[8] Project: Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Bordering Territories, p. 4.

[9] Migration Trends, p. 31.

[10] Project: Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Bordering Territories, p. 4.

[11] Migration Trends, p. 27.

[12] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[13] Ibid., p. 29.

[14] Ibid, p. 11.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Project: Post-Conflict Rehabilitation of Bordering Territories.

[17] Op. cit.

GEORGIA
GEORGIA
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
ARMENIA
AZERBAIJAN
NAGORNO-KARABAKH
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
(Azerbaijan)
NAXÇIVAN (AR)
Lake Sevan
Yerevan
Tashir
Allahverdi
Ashotsk
Stepanavan
Ijevan
Dilijan
Gyumri
Spitak
Vanadzor
Aparan
Hrazdan
Sevan
Karnut
Yevlax
Bärdä
Aragats
Ashtarak
Abovian
Kamo
Masis
Martuni
Vardenis
Artashat
Ararat
Yelpin
Djermouk
Aras (Araz)
Goris
Sisian
Dastakert
Ghapan
Julfa
Ordubad
Meghri
ARMENIA
International boundary
Autonomous oblast (AO) boundary
National capital
Autonomous republic (AR) and oblast (AO) centers
Town
Main Road
Road
Railroad
Airport
The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.